

October 19, 2020

## WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS



West Central Florida county health departments encourage everyone to take steps to ensure safe and happy Halloween festivities across the region this year.

West Central Florida county health departments include those serving Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota counties.

If trick-or-treating is allowed in your community:

- **Plan costumes that are bright and reflective.** Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and trick-or-treat bags for greater visibility.
- **Make sure that shoes fit well** and that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame.
- **Look for "*flame resistant*" on the costume labels.** Wigs and accessories should also clearly indicate this.
- **Avoid any sharp or long swords, canes, or sticks as a costume accessory.** Your child can easily be hurt by these accessories if he or she stumbles or trips.
- **Do not use decorative contact lenses without an eye examination and a prescription from an eye care professional.** While the packaging on decorative lenses will often make claims such as "*one size fits all*" or "*no need to see an eye specialist*," obtaining decorative contact lenses without a prescription is both dangerous and illegal. This can cause pain, inflammation and serious eye disorders and infections, which may lead to permanent vision loss.

For those unable to go trick-or-treating, there are still plenty of activities to enjoy the holiday:

- **Carving or decorating pumpkins with family members and displaying them.** Children can draw a face with markers and parents can do the cutting. Consider using a flashlight or glow stick instead of a candle to light your pumpkin. If you do use a candle, a votive candle is safest. Do not place candlelit pumpkins on a porch or any path where visitors may pass close by.
- **Doing a Halloween scavenger hunt where children are given lists of Halloween-themed things to look for while they walk outdoors from house to house admiring Halloween decorations.**
- **Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples.**

- **Attend a small, outdoor and open-air costume parade or have a virtual costume contest**

If you plan to stay home this year and hand out goodies to neighborhood children:

- **Remove tripping hazards to keep your home safe for trick-or-treaters.**  
Keep the porch and front yard clear of anything a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations.
- **Check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs.**
- **Sweep wet leaves from sidewalks and steps.**
- **Provide grab-and-go goodie bags instead of individual pieces of candy.**  
If you are preparing goodie bags, [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing the bags.

Parents are encouraged to give children a good meal prior to parties and trick-or-treating to prevent overindulgence on candy. Keep an eye on what your child has in his or her mouth while trick or treating.

Additional resources for a safe and healthy Halloween can be found on the websites for the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

For more information or questions, please contact your county health department.

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|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| <b>DOH-Citrus</b>       | (352) 527-0068 | <b>DOH-Manatee</b>  | (941) 748-0747 |
| <b>DOH-Hardee</b>       | (863) 773-4161 | <b>DOH-Pasco</b>    | (727) 619-0300 |
| <b>DOH-Hernando</b>     | (352) 540-6800 | <b>DOH-Pinellas</b> | (727) 824-6900 |
| <b>DOH-Highlands</b>    | (863) 386-6040 | <b>DOH-Polk</b>     | (863) 519-7900 |
| <b>DOH-Hillsborough</b> | (813) 307-8000 | <b>DOH-Sarasota</b> | (941) 861-2900 |

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### About the Florida Department of Health

The Florida Department of Health, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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